the major novels he dramatises it not merely as a process of self-assertive virtue, but also as a mode of self-transcendence which has destroyed the barriers between the self and the world outside.

Henry James's fiction traces and develops the idea of refinement intrinsically and organically as a quest for the truth of human selfhccd. At this point, Henry James reveals the historical connections between his own art and that of the American writers who preceded him. The human self and its modes of expression have been the fundamental premises of the American imagination. Emerson was indulging in a mnemonic recapitulation of the heritage of the American people, when he declared his age to be an age of the "first person singular". The Pilgrim Fathers first landed on the shores of the New World propelled, as they were, by the promptitudes of the European self which was still fresh under the impact of the Renaissance and the Reformation. The Puritans, tradition-directed as they were, localised and inhabited a whole cultural tradition within the resources of the human self. And whatever they did to establish a New World culture felt the pull and tug of the human self. Their townships, their universities, their jungle clearances, their theocracy, their laborious theological and naturalistic discourses, all bore the common stamp of a self unabashedly eager to express itself in a thousand manifestations of its irrepressible energy. Ironically enough even the thundering, wrathful and vindictive God of the Puritans turned out to be an emblem of the Puritan selfhood. In the very congenial and Epicurean South, under the impact of the Deistic Rationalism and Naturalistic Enlightenment, nature was viewed more or less as an extension of the human self, and the foundations of the American Republic were themselves laid on the firm rock of the human self. The Westward Frontier was undoubtedly a cosmic simulacrum of the human self imposing its forms and its moods on the

stiapeless and chaotic vitalities of the discoverable and inexhaustible dimensions of time and space. When a truly national literature for America was coming into being, the writers were compelled to turn to the abstractions of American selfhood in order to discover the universals of experience, and thus make life and tradition available as the resources of art.

The literature of the nineteenth century, somewhat nebulously called transcendentalist, was in a sense a continuous dramatisation **of** the idea of American selfhood. Emerson declared the literary'